

## Sanofi enters into a \$273 mn research deal with Exscientia

10 May 2017 | News

**The deal aims to develop new medical interventions in the area of metabolic disease**



**Singapore:** French drug giant Sanofi has inked a \$273 million research deal and licence option agreement in metabolic disease with UK-based Exscientia, a company involved in artificial intelligence (AI)-driven drug discovery. As per the terms, Exscientia will use its platform to seek out and validate combinations of drug targets that could work synergistically and be amenable to its bispecific-small-molecule design strategy - by which a small molecule is designed to be compatible with two distinct drug targets.

Exscientia is responsible for all compound design, whilst chemistry synthesis will be delivered by Sanofi. Further assays, preclinical experiments and subsequent trials for compounds progressing to the clinic will be managed by Sanofi, where the French drugmaker exercises its licence option. Exscientia will receive research funding in order to identify target pairs with the best combination of chemical compatibility and strong biological relevance plus further funding for prioritised candidate delivery opportunities.

Starting with over a thousand disease-relevant target combinations, Exscientia will triage opportunities and prioritize those with promising bispecific binding potential.

Target pairs fulfilling initial tractability criteria will pass through to Exscientia's lead-finding platform in order to generate bispecific-small-molecule compounds that can further validate the biological hypothesis. Bispecific small molecules passing all these quality gates may progress to full candidate delivery projects for Sanofi.

Rapid delivery of multiple bispecific opportunities will be empowered by a pipeline of Exscientia capabilities driven by AI and enabled automated design.

The deals will allow Exscientia to apply its technology to a wider range of therapeutic areas than its internal operation can handle. Exscientia is focusing its own pipeline on immuno-oncology, notably through a collaboration with Evotec that gives it access to the medicinal chemistry capabilities of the Toulouse, France, site the CRO picked up from Sanofi. As the platform is applicable outside of this niche, Exscientia plans to partner to apply it to other therapeutic areas.

Andrew Hopkins, chief executive of Exscientia, said: "We are delighted that Sanofi is engaging with Exscientia in a comprehensive, end-to-end drug discovery project. This agreement highlights Exscientia's ability to apply bispecific drug design in a comprehensive and highly productive manner. Sanofi has put together an excellent experimental backbone for

this collaboration and we look forward to delivering high-value projects for the company.”